

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 05352 141137Z

22

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

ACDA-07 SSM-03 SAM-01 SAB-01 /082 W

----- 128711

R 141025Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9104

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

DIA WASHDC

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE DAMASCUS 5352

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, SY, LE

SUBJECT: SYRIA ANNOUNCES TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF BORDER WITH
LEBANON AND NEW TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

1. AUG. 13 SYRIAN RADIO ANNOUNCED TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF ITS
BORDER WITH LEBANON "IN VIEW OF THE SECURITY CONDITIONS WHICH
COUNTRY PASSING THROUGH". THOSE WISHING TO CROSS BORDERS IN
EITHER DIRECTION ASKED TO OBTAIN PERMITS FROM ADMINISTRATIVE
AUTHORITIES IN BOTH COUNTRIES BEGINNING AUG. 14.

2. COMMENT: INFORMATION OBTAINED FROM LOCAL SOURCES INDICATES
SECURITY CONCERNS WERE UPPERMOST WHEN SARG TOOK DECISION TO
INITIATE TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS BETWEEN SYRIA AND LEBANON. WE
LEARNED FROM LEBANESE ARCHBISHOP OF TRIPOLI, WHO TRIED TO
ENTER LEBANON AUG. 13, THAT BORDER CLOSED "DUE TO INTERNAL
PROBLEMS IN SYRIA". FOLLOWING SERIES OF BOMB EXPLOSIONS IN
DAMASCUS, WHICH HAS RAISED SARG SUSPICIONS AGAINST PALESTIN-
IANS COMING FROM LEBANON AS WELL AS IRAQI ELEMENTS, AND WITH
ONE MILLION REFUGEES FROM LEBANON ALREADY IN SYRIA, SARG
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SECURITY AUTHORITIES HAVE DECIDED THEY CAN NO LONGER AFFORD

TO MAINTAIN SYRIA'S UNRESTRICTED OPEN DOOR HOSPITALITY WITH ITS NEIGHBOR. WE ALSO ASSUME THAT FALL OF TALL ZA'TAR CAMP INFLUENCED TIMING OF THIS MOVE BY SARG, WITH ITS CONCOMITTANT THREAT OF REPRISALS BY PALESTINIAN REJECTIONISTS AND LEBANESE LEFT.

3. "AUTHORITY" IN BEIRUT UNQUESTIONABLY REFERS TO FRANJIYYA'S POWER CENTER. HOW THIS WILL AFFECT OUR SUPPLY RUNS TO AMERICAN UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL IN WEST BEIRUT REMAINS TO BE SEEN. MURPHY

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